

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 10, 2011

Agenda Item: Elk Management Guidelines in Areas with Brucellosis

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Informational

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Brucellosis surveillance in Montana elk herds has taken place since the early 1980s with most of the effort focused on the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA). Surveillance consists primarily of testing blood collected from hunter-harvested elk or elk captured for research. Starting in winter 2011, live elk were captured in a more focused effort to understand brucellosis in elk.

There is currently a Designated Surveillance Area (DSA) in the GYA administered by the Montana Department of Livestock (DoL). This management application is a reflection of new Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) rules regarding brucellosis in livestock. As the DoL placement of that line includes considerations of elk seroprevalence, distribution and movements, FWP has worked with DoL to identify areas of uncertainty relative to elk movements and seroprevalence. Those areas are the focus of the targeted elk surveillance with significant funding for these efforts coming from APHIS.

With events that include targeted surveillance of live elk and the latest confirmation of brucellosis in livestock only being the most recent developments on this topic, brucellosis in elk continues to be a significant and often contentious topic for the public and agencies. Wildlife advocates may question the need for concern while livestock interests look for additional efforts. Current FWP participation is focused on risk management and includes hazing elk to reduce site specific commingling of elk and livestock to reduce the chance of infection from one to the other.

To provide for longer term guidance, FWP proposes to assemble a citizen working group that would be temporarily assembled to explore and potentially identify recommended elk management guidelines in areas with brucellosis for the FWP Commission to consider. This process would include a call for nominations in late fall 2011 and the use of a facilitated structured decision making process to begin in January 2012. FWP staff would help with meeting logistics and facilitation and would provide technical inputs along with other agencies to include the DoL. The FWP Commission represents final authority in any adoption of elk management guidelines.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Members of the public may nominate themselves or others for this working group. Working group meetings would be open for the public to attend but would be wholly dedicated to the working group's discussions. Public review of recommendations and associated public comment would occur via existing Commission process as/if any recommendations are proposed.